

EXCERPTS FROM THE
LOOKOUT
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TWO PSA MEN AWARDED MEDALS

LEONARD P. LaRUE '34 RECEIVES U. S. MER-
CHANT MARINE MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL IN
WASHINGTON

Secretary of Commerce Frederick H. Mueller, members of the Senate and House, Maritime, Navy and shipping officials, and the Korean Ambassador honored the SS MEREDITH VICTORY, her former captain, Leonard P. LaRue '34 and crew on August 24th in Washington, D. C.

The ceremonies were the result of an Act of Congress, signed by President Eisenhower on March 31st providing for the presentation of a Gallant Ship Plaque to the SS MEREDITH VICTORY a Meritorious Service Gold Medal to former Captain LaRue, now Brother Marinus of the Order of St. Benedict, and unit citations and ribbons to the master, officers and the crew of the ship for what has been described as "the greatest rescue operation by a single ship in the history of mankind."

The feat occurred during the Korean War 3 days before Christmas 1950 at the port of Hungnam upon which the North Korean and Chinese Communist armies were converging. The guns of the U. S. Navy, field artillery, and carrier-based planes held back the Communists while the American forces were withdrawing. Within the defense perimeter of Hungnam were thousands of Korean refugees. For the entire civilian population, the Communists had decreed death by beheading for aiding the allied forces. To save them, the thousands of Koreans were shuttled in landing craft from shore to the American ships in the harbor.

Among these ships was the MEREDITH VICTORY operated by Moore-McCormack for MSTs. Up over the side via cargo nets and into the ship, with normal accommodations for 12 passengers, poured thousands of Koreans for nearly 24 hours to be lowered in the holds by winches on cargo pallets. With more than 14,000 aboard, the ship steamed out of Hungnam, passing through a 30 mile enemy mine field. With little food and water aboard, with no doctor, not even an interpreter the ship arrived 3 days later at the island of KOJI-DO some 50 miles southwest of Pusan, on Christmas eve, 1950 with her cargo of humanity increased by five babies born en-route.

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The Propeller Club of the United States, Port of Washington, D. C. were hosts for the awards ceremony and noon luncheon in the Ballroom of the National Press Club. Rear Admiral Walter C. Ford, Deputy Maritime Administrator and President of the Propeller Club of the Port of Washington presided at the meeting.

Speakers at the meeting included Vice Admiral R. E. Wilson, Chairman of the Federal Maritime Board and Maritime Administrator; Vice Admiral Gano, Commandant, MSTs; Senator Jacob Javits of New York who was one of the co-sponsors of the bill in Congress, and General II KWONG Chung, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea. The invocation and benediction for the ceremonies were pronounced by the Abbot of St. Paul's, the Rt. Rev. Charles V. Coriston who had accompanied Brother Marinus to Washington.

First of the awards to be presented was the unveiling of the Gallant Ship Award to be installed aboard the SS MEREDITH VICTORY. This award is a large oak placque upon which a bronze medallion depicting the Gallant Ship, and beneath the medallion a bronze tablet describing the citation of the ship.

One officer and five former crew members of the original crew of the ship were present to receive individual copies of the unit citation and ribbons from Secretary Mueller.

The Secretary of Commerce introduced the former Captain LaRue and explained the events leading up to his present religious status in the Benedictine Order. The Secretary then read the citation and presented the gold medal to Brother Marinus.

The medal is suspended on a blue ribbon with red and white stripes and has on its front side the eagle seal of the United States. The reverse side is engraved around the edge with the following words: "For Meritorious Service in the United States Merchant Marine." Within these words is engraved: "SS MEREDITH VICTORY" Leonard P. LaRue Dec. 22,23,24- 1950.

Highlight of the ceremony was the humble acceptance of the medal by Brother Marinus with the following remarks in part:

"To all here present and also to those in absentia, who are, herein, honoring the SS MEREDITH VICTORY and her entire complement, as one of those so honored and speaking in behalf of my former shipmates, all of us wish to express to you, and through you to our President and the Congress, our sincere and our humble thanks.

One of the first maxims a man learns in going to sea, is to always give another man a hand with a job he cannot do himself. The entire safety of the vessel and all that she carries depends on this principle. You might say that this is a corollary of 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' In fulfillment of this principle at Hungnam, the cooperation and sustaining efforts of both officers and men, their devotion to ideals

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and duties as Americans and as seamen was outstanding and exemplary. In addition to the references made in this regard, I should like to add my own personal attestation, my commendation and my gratitude for their endeavors. More than all this however, our thanks are due to Divine Providence for the successful outcome of this venture.

In returning to our monastic family at St. Paul's, both Father Abbot and I wish to assure you and the officers and men of the MEREDITH VICTORY and all your loved ones, that you will not be forgotten in our prayers. We ask, in your charity, that you remember us in yours and especially remember all of the men of the sea, for theirs, in more than a mere physical sense, is both a trying and a hazardous calling.

In closing, the former master, officers and men of the MEREDITH VICTORY wish to leave you with a seaman's greeting. This comes especially from the heart of a seaman turned Benedictine who wishes you and our country smooth sailing and always happy days. Thank you and may God bless you!"

The reaction of the assembled guests to these words of thanks can best be summed up by a statement in a letter Secretary Mueller wrote to Brother Marinus several days later in which he said, "You obviously spoke from the heart, and your words were quite meaningful to the audience."

The exceptional interest of our government officials in these awards is shown further in a telegram which was received by Secretary Mueller from the Vice-President.

THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

I GREATLY APPRECIATE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS, THROUGH YOU, MY DEEP ADMIRATION AND APPRECIATION TO BROTHER MARINUS, FORMER MASTER OF THE SS MEREDITH VICTORY, FOR THE MAGNIFICENT LEADERSHIP HE GAVE TO THE ENTIRE CREW OF THAT GALIANT SHIP WHICH ENABLED THEM TO SAVE 14,000 SOUTH KOREANS FROM COMMUNIST SLAVERY IN THE EVACUATION OF HUNGNAM IN DEC. 1950. THIS OUTSTANDING HUMANITARIAN ACHIEVEMENT WILL LIVE LONG AND GLORIOUSLY IN THE ANNALS OF HISTORY. KIND REGARDS,

DICK NIXON

Likewise, when President Eisenhower signed into law the unusual bill commending the SS MEREDITH VICTORY and its crew, White House Secretary, James Hagerty said the feat was so unusual that the White House had asked for a summary of the rescue operations.

**BRO. MARINUS NOMINATED
FOR 2nd JAMOKE POT AWARD**

Concurrently with Congress considering the bill for the MEREDITH VICTORY awards, the executive committee of the Pennsylvania Schoolship Association nominated Brother Marinus for its second JAMOKE POT AWARD which is awarded to members attaining outstanding personal achievement, and particularly, to those members making their achievement in the maritime field.

President Ed Blake wrote to Brother Marinus informing him of his nomination for the JAMOKE PCT AWARD and also offered a suitable religious award in his honor in Philadelphia if the Association award would be contrary to his present status of avowed poverty in the Benedictine Order.

We quote in part the reply from Brother Marinus:

"I want to thank you and the membership for your words of congratulations, your kind interest and sentiments. Rest assured, all of you maintain an irreplaceable affection in my heart and memories and daily, along with your loved ones, are remembered in my communions and prayers . . . In regard to the idea you mentioned in honoring me, I would prefer to be left out of the picture entirely. Instead, I humbly suggest that if the alumni wish to do something in this regard that the chalice you mention or plaque or other idea you may have in mind, may be dedicated to the men who have passed on. Even though all the members are not Catholic, still whatever their belief or lack of it, if such there be, that all men in general usually respect the dead and would like to honor them. I am more than thankful to you personally Ed, and to the members for this suggestion and I feel sure that all hands would be in accord with the above."

There are approximately 40 religious at St. Paul's. This includes priests, clerics and Brothers. Brother Marinus is the third American in 35 years to become a Brother there and lives under four vows which are poverty, chastity, obedience and a fourth vow which is peculiar to the Benedictines namely—stability. The last vow ties him to the monastery for life. The only time he can leave the monastery is when he has permission from his superior and then it must be for good and sufficient reason. This will explain his inability to attend any of the PSA meetings.

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However, all hands may visit him at St. Paul's Abbey in Newton, N. J. Between religious exercises his duties are running the Slop Chest at the minastery where you can find him. He may even treat you to a cup of jamoke!

The story of Brother Marinus is a story of Christmas. It commenced on a cold hungry Christmas Eve in 1950 for 14,000 Koreans when Captain LaRue of the SS MEREDITH VICTORY wrote in the ship's log:

"The nearness of Christmas carries my thoughts to the Holy Family—how they, too, were cold and without shelter. Like the crucified Christ, these good people suffer through the actions of guilty men."

We need not surmise what his thoughts were on Christmas Eve in 1959 when he took his perpetual vows . . . nor, on every Christmas Eve thereafter.

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